

2023 – 2026 Service Plans and Budgets

2023-2026 Service Plans and Budgets Research and Engagement Final Report

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Research and Engagement: 2023 Service Plans and Budgets

At The City, we are individually responsible and collectively accountable for ensuring that the services that matter most to Calgarians, matter most to us. The insight and input The City gets from research and engagement helps us understand the needs of Calgarians, which allows us to shape our four-year service plans and budgets to better meet those needs. It is also important that the research and engagement be current because as Calgarians' needs change, the delivery of our services should adapt accordingly.

Insights developed from research and engagement over the last year will help services better understand Calgarians' opinions, preferences and attitudes on service delivery and value. This understanding enables a data-driven approach to decision-making and planning so that our service plans and budgets provide the highest service value possible.

Phase 2 Research and Engagement

Through different methods and questions to provide a holistic overview, both Research and Engage gathered information on resident and business perceptions around service prioritization and delivery this summer and fall. This provides additional feedback and themes for Council to consider when making decisions.

Please find results from public engagement beginning on Page 2. Results from resident and business leader focus groups begin on Page 23.

Part I: City of Calgary – Engage Resource Unit

Phase 2 Stakeholder Report Back: What We Heard

Project overview

Every four years, The City creates service plans and budgets to deliver on what's important to Calgarians. These documents provide the roadmap for how we deliver services to citizens and the financial plan to support our actions. As we are in the last year of the 2019-2022 Service Plans and Budgets, work is underway to create the 2023-2026 Service Plans and Budgets.

We are working to deliver on what you value most in our services for your community and across the city. In Phase 2 Engagement for Service Plans and Budgets, we focused on continuing the conversation from the main themes heard in Phase 1.

Calgary is a resilient city. Time and again, we come together, support each other, learn from our experience and use our shared journey to set new goals. All City Council's decisions are guided by economic, social and climate resilience. In the 2023-2026 Service Plans and Budgets, Administration will deliver on [Resilient Calgary: Council's Strategic Direction 2023-2026](#).

Engagement overview

The purpose of the public engagement was to gather feedback to further understand your thoughts about our services based on the main themes heard in Phase 1.

From 2022 September 1 to 30, feedback was collected online through the [Engage Portal](#) and City social media channels, as well as through 17 in-person pop-up events at libraries, parks, city and partner recreation centres, and post-secondary institutions.

What we asked

Under the main themes heard in Phase 1 engagement, we asked the following questions to help City Administration and Council understand your thoughts about our services:

Community Growth and Changes Theme - Calgarians understand that sustainable growth and change will support increased service efficiency.

- As communities grow and change, what would you like to see included in our service plans and budgets in response?
- How can The City improve how we sustain and improve services as we grow?

Social Wellbeing Theme - Collectively as a city, social wellbeing is important and citizens expect services to reflect safety, access to services and connections to create a sense of belonging for all Calgarians.

- How do you think The City could improve social wellbeing and community connection?
- How do you think The City can improve current services to include the needs of Indigenous, Black and diverse Racialized peoples?

Equity and Inclusion Theme - Equity and inclusion are important to consider when making decisions about services and service delivery that impact all Calgarians.

- How would you like to see City of Calgary services, programs and operations be more equitable, racially just and inclusive?

Cost Reduction Theme - Citizens expect The City to seek out efficiencies and cost reductions without lowering overall service levels, as service levels are connected with quality of life for Calgarians.

- Where do you see opportunities for The City to be more efficient or reduce costs while maintaining services needed for quality of life? How?

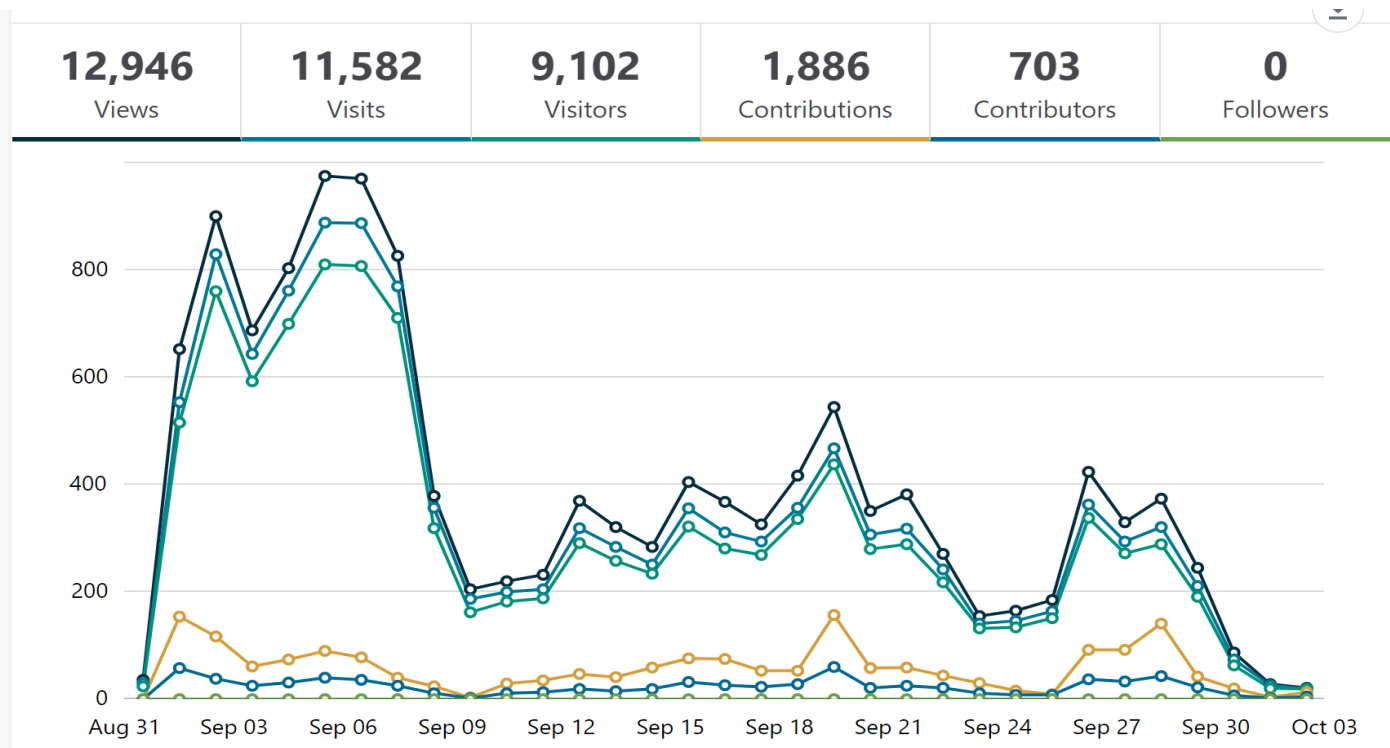
Fiscal Responsibility Theme - Calgarians have high expectations about fiscal responsibility and receiving value for services provided through a balance of property taxes and user fees.

- How else would you like The City to demonstrate to you that we are being fiscally responsible?

As well, we asked you to share what ward you live and a closing question about what else is important for Administration and Council to consider when finalizing the 2023-2026 Service Plans and Budgets.

Participation

The total number of people (contributors) who participated by providing feedback through the Engage Portal was 703, leaving 1,886 pieces of feedback. In addition, there were 9,102 people who visited the site to learn about the service planning and budget process (see graphic below). An additional 473 pieces of feedback were left through Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.



Views: The cumulative number of times a visitor visits the page in a site.

Visits: The number of end-user session associated with a single visitor.

Visitors: The number of unique public or end-users in a site. A visitor is only counted once.

Contributions: The total number of responses of feedback collected through the participation tools.

Contributors: The unique number of visitors who have left feedback through the participation tools.

We connected with a further 1,008 Calgarians through 17 in-person pop-up events throughout the city (see below for details).

Date	Location	Calgarians Connected
Wednesday, September 7	Cardel Rec South	21
Thursday, September 8	River Park	22
Saturday, September 10	The Genesis Centre	31
Tuesday, September 13	Crowfoot Library	61
Wednesday, September 14	Nose Hill Library	62
Thursday, September 15	Village Square Leisure Centre	74
Saturday, September 17	Brookfield Residential YMCA at Seton	101
Tuesday, September 20	Forest Lawn Library	40
Wednesday, September 21	Fish Creek Library	13
Thursday, September 22	University of Calgary	35
Thursday, September 22	Southland Leisure Centre	31
Saturday, September 24	Shane Homes YMCA at Rocky Ridge	107
Monday, September 26	SAIT	36
Tuesday, September 27	Westside Recreation	150
Wednesday, September 28	Mount Royal University	150
Wednesday, September 28	Vivo for Healthier Generations	35
Thursday, September 29	Calgary Central Library	39

Promotional channels we used to inform Calgarians of the engagement were:

- Social media promotions on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and WeChat
- Earned media coverage
- Digital banner advertisements (English, Traditional and Simplified Chinese, Arabic, Spanish and Punjabi)
- Ethnic radio on Red FM (Punjabi/Hindi), Fairchild (Mandarin/Cantonese) and Windspeaker (English/Blackfoot/Stony Nakoda)
- Email newsletters
- Civic partner and community newsletters
- Program signage in every ward of the city

What we heard

Below are the most frequently heard main themes for each question. (Please note main themes are not in any order.) For a more detailed exploration of themes identified please see the Summary of Input section.

Community Growth and Changes – Question 1: As communities grow and change, what would you like to see included in our service plans and budgets in response?

Main Themes:

- Invest in transportation infrastructure, especially for active transportation modes, along with a focus on safe and reliable public transit service.
- Less new community approvals and increase established community density with a focus on transit-oriented development and active transportation modes.
- Invest in maintaining high quality park space through landscaping and activity infrastructure for safe recreation opportunities and programs.

Community Growth and Changes – Question 2: How can The City improve how we sustain and improve services as we grow?

Main Themes:

- Less new community approvals and increase established community density with a focus on transit-oriented development.
- Expectation to focus on basic or core services delivery and listen to Calgarians when making decisions and evaluating services and projects, and adapt to changing needs.

Social Wellbeing Theme – Question 1: How do you think The City could improve social wellbeing and community connection?

Main Themes:

- Improve the quality of public parks and community facilities to create more opportunities for the community to come together.
- Focus on opportunities for affordable programming and events and provide community hubs for informal connections and gatherings.
- Prioritize safety on public transit and roads through bylaw and police presence and enforcement.
- Work with organizations and other levels of government to offer social and preventative programs.

Social Wellbeing Theme – Question 2: How do you think The City can improve current services to include the needs of Indigenous, Black and diverse Racialized peoples?

Main Themes:

- More diversity awareness and education through training opportunities and through programming and events.
- Ensure The City treats everyone equally in service delivery and not a separate focus on diverse Racialized peoples.
- More intentional outreach to diverse Racialized peoples and organizations to learn about their perspective on service delivery where we can improve and/or focus on inclusivity and safety.

Equity and Inclusion - Question: How would you like to see City of Calgary services, programs and operations be more equitable, racially just and inclusive?

Main Themes:

- Increase services and infrastructure equitably through all communities in the city.
- Ensure all service delivery has a focus on affordability and accessibility.
- Focus on alternative active modes of transportation as well as more accessible and affordable public transit solutions.
- Some felt equity and inclusion was not The City's responsibility and/or it was fine as it was.

Fiscal Responsibility Theme - Question: How else would you like The City to demonstrate to you that we are being fiscally responsible?

Main Themes:

- Expectation to focus on basic or core services delivery and concerns about the value of tax dollars and resources going towards perceived nice-to-have and non-municipal services and projects.
- Expect more communication and transparency about the cost of City services and projects including more details and evaluations about the benefits and value.
- Work within the budget and focus on basic or core services with no increases to or lower taxes.
- Concerns about the cost of City human resources including number of management levels, number of Administration positions, and Administration and councillor compensation and benefit levels.

Cost Reduction Theme - Question: Where do you see opportunities for The City to be more efficient or reduce costs while maintaining services needed for quality of life? How?

Main Themes:

- Concerns about the cost of City human resources including number of management positions, high Administration, and councillor compensation and benefit levels, work coordination between departments, and consultant costs.
- Expectation to focus on basic or core services delivery and concerns about the value of tax dollars and resources going towards perceived nice-to-have and non-municipal services and projects.

Closing Question: What else is important for Council and Administration to consider when finalizing the 2023-2026 Service Plans and Budgets? Would you mind letting us know why this is important?

Main Themes:

- Reduce or cap taxes by finding efficiencies and reducing costs of service delivery and Administration with a focus on basic or core services.
- Focus on basic or core services and infrastructure that are within municipal authority and be more transparent and open about costs.
- Invest in safe and sustainable transportation delivery and infrastructure including public transit and active transportation modes.

For a detailed summary of the input that was provided, please see the [Summary of Input](#) section.

All verbatim comments can be found in a separate document on engage.calgary.ca/yourservices.

Next steps

City Council will have the opportunity to consider engagement participant feedback and perspectives when deliberating and debating on the proposed 2023-2026 Service Plans and Budgets in November 2022.

Summary of Input

To go directly to a summary for each theme please click on a link below.

[Cost Reduction Theme](#)

[Social Wellbeing Theme](#)

[Fiscal Responsibility Theme](#)

[Equity and Inclusion Theme](#)

[Community Growth and Changes Theme](#)

[Closing Question](#)

Part II: City of Calgary – Corporate Research Service Priorities Focus Groups Topline Report

Background and Objectives

The City conducted a series of focus groups with both residents and businesses to better understand Calgarians’ perspectives on service delivery and service value, City spending and budget, value for taxes, user fees and other critical areas, within the context of Resilient Calgary: Council’s Strategic Direction. Results from this research will be used to help Administration and Council frame and focus on those areas Calgarians say are most important to them and provide inputs into Council’s decision-making for the 2023-2026 Service Plans and Budgets.

Methodology

A total of ten (10) focus groups with 64 participants (4-8 participants per group) were conducted between 2022 October 12-20. Each session lasted a total of 1.5 hours and were conducted online via Teams, while City of Calgary representatives observed all sessions.

In close collaboration with The City’s Corporate Research team, Leger designed a recruitment screening questionnaire to recruit participants, ensuring a good mix of gender, age, area of residence and other demographics in the case of residents and a mix of business industry, tenure in Calgary, and other firmographics in the case of businesses. Leger and Corporate Research also collaborated to develop a moderator’s guide of discussion themes.

The focus groups were conducted among Calgarians (general public) and Calgary business leaders with the following group compositions:

Group	Audience	No. of Participants	Date
1	Business Small (1-49 employees)	7	Oct 12
2	Business Medium (50- 199 employees)	6	Oct 12
3	Business Medium & Large (50- 199 / 200+ employees)	5	Oct 12
4	Business Small 1-49 (employees)	7	Oct 13
5	Business Medium 50-199 (employees)	7	Oct 13
6	Calgarians – Northeast residents	4	Oct 18
7	Calgarians- Northwest residents	8	Oct 18

8	Calgarians – Southeast residents	7	Oct 19
9	Calgarians- Southwest residents	8	Oct 19
10	Calgarians – Downtown residents	5	Oct 20

Please note: The following findings are qualitative in nature. The work is exploratory as a result of the number of participants and the method by which the sample was drawn. The results should be regarded as directional and may not necessarily be projected to the larger population without further quantitative research.

Summary of Findings

Summary 1: Unaided Perceptions of Services / Service Experiences / Desired Changes

Resident Summary

Key Themes: Although focus group participants are generally happy with services received from The City, they do feel there are some key areas for improvement – City response time for snow removal and public inquiries for example, and transit services in terms of reliability, being on time, consistency, and wider access outside of downtown. Participants also say they want more leadership and transparency from The City and Council on spending and decision making, as well as more supports for low-income Calgarians.

Key Service Areas Used: Recreation, transit, parks, open spaces and pathways, roads and infrastructure (including snow removal), library, waste services.

When discussing experiences using City services, Calgarians' experiences varied.

Positive Experiences

City operated recreation facilities and programming, while having some areas of improvement noted by participants (particularly in regard to swimming class registration), are generally well received and valued among focus group participants. They appreciate the programs and services provided at facilities (accessible and affordable), as well as how well-maintained facilities are.

“Recreation is amazing – efficient, easy, can do everything you need in one day.”

Some participants cite the supports The City provides newcomers and immigrants as essential. From providing Fair Entry support, to providing access to information on services and supports available, as well as providing a free library card and library access where essential services are available for free.

Calgarians also value The City's parks and open spaces. Providing outdoor opportunities is something The City is excelling at was echoed by many participants.

Waste services is another City service that Calgarians repeatedly cite positive experiences with. Many specifically noted that the service is reliable and efficient, with minimal issues in delivery.

Negative Experiences

Response time was a common theme noted with many negative experiences recalled by focus group participants – including snow removal (specifically on residential streets and back alleys), and City response and follow-up to public inquiries and requests. EMS was also cited by some participants as lacking in response time – however, many of these participants did not know about recent changes in provincial centralization.

Some participants also recalled difficulties in accessing recreation programming – particularly swimming. This prompted later discussion about potential opportunities for The City to privatize these services, among others (recreation, waste, arts and culture).

“Swim class availability has decreased – maybe less instructors? Having a hard time getting into classes. Classes are offered during the day but that does not fit with my work schedule.”

Many participants also note various issues with transit. Some comment that bus schedules are not as consistent and/or reliable as the CTrain, making accessing downtown difficult as well as resulting in long wait times. Safety on transit is also a common concern raised by participants, which many attribute to the lack of access to mental health supports provided by The City to marginalized communities.

One participant expressed wanting to see more waste management education and support in multi-family units.

“Would like to see better representation of waste management in apartment buildings – sorting waste is a climate mitigation strategy, but people in apartments aren’t really sorting it, and then get punishments as a building.”

Is The City Providing the Right Services?

Generally, yes. While some participants note that while they do not always agree with Council’s priorities – such as downtown revitalization, environmental initiatives, and/or public art investments, overall, they generally agree The City provides accessible and affordable services to all Calgarians.

“Council wants to spend money on climate change but not services that people want.”

Many also feel that Calgarians are receiving adequate services for their tax dollars spent, stating that other cities pay higher taxes and receive the same level of services.

Among those that do not feel The City is providing the right services, many say that wider transit networks outside of the downtown core are needed as is better planning when it comes to city and transportation growth, and more access to mental health supports.

What Do Calgarians Need?

Overall, when asked what Calgarians want in terms of the programs and services they receive from The City, focus group participants most commonly mentioned:

- Consistent, reliable, and safe transit services.
- Transparency from The City and Council on spending and decision making.
“Money is being spent for ‘in topic issues’ and not daily needs.”
- More supports for low-income, specifically accessing programs, accessing transit, accessing housing.

“Struggle for low-income individuals to access what they need – especially with rising costs and inflation.”

- Want to see leadership and accountability from The City.

“Pension, union-protected jobs so need to be held accountable for their actions.”

Business Participant Summary

Key Themes: Generally, participants in the business focus groups are happy and feel supported. While some participants would like to see a reduction in red tape for business licensing (make more easily accessible and easy to use), many also say they want more communication from The City on what is going on around the city, specifically when it comes to infrastructure projects. Some business focus group participants also state a need for improvements in transit to help bring customers and employees more efficiently and effectively.

Key Service Areas Used: Road maintenance and infrastructure, snow removal, public transit, parking, emergency services, waste services

Summary of Findings:

When discussing current services utilized by business participants, many note that their work environment has changed over the past couple of years (due to the COVID-19 pandemic). Many business participants say they have now adopted a hybrid work model or have moved entirely to a work from home model. As such, some participants feel less impacted or they have less experience with City services – from a business perspective.

While many note utilizing less City services due to hybrid and work from home models, all business participants agree that road maintenance and infrastructure services, transit, snow removal, emergency services and waste services have the biggest impacts on Calgary businesses.

Overall, business participants feel supported by The City and happy to be business operators in Calgary. Many note the collaborative and entrepreneurial spirit of the business community in Calgary as well as some business supports and services available through The City as reasons for their positive sentiments (e.g. the Outdoor Patio program).

When asked what would make them feel more supported, some business participants noted more flexibility and easier access when it comes to business licensing and attaining business specific services from The City – many citing feelings that they currently need to “jump through too many hoops” when it comes to licensing specifically.

Road Maintenance and Infrastructure Services, including Snow Removal

Many business focus group participants commonly note frustrations with road construction whether it's on their commute to work, in delivering their services to customers around the city, or impacting customer access to their brick-and-mortar locations. Overall, a majority of business participants feel that poorly managed road maintenance is impacting their bottom line. They feel there could be better planning by The City when projects are run, who is contracted to manage them, and most notably, better communication from The City on the progress of projects around the city.

Communication is a hot topic for business participants when it comes to road construction and maintenance. Many business group participants are very clear on their need to see better communication from The City around progress updates on various road construction projects

around the city, noting that this would help them better plan their commutes, while providing them more insight into what is going on around their business.

“The City makes it very challenging to visit brick and mortar places.”

“City planning, construction should be better. Sometimes construction on both side of the roads [impacts access to businesses].”

Snow removal was also discussed heavily among business participants, and while participants generally feel that The City does a good job of clearing the snow from major routes, many state that more could be done for side streets and residential areas where some businesses are located. Some also note that they feel The City could be faster in their response to snow fall.

“Feels like it is not enough – snow clearing is not done in a timely fashion.”

Public Transit Services

Public transit was another City service that was commonly discussed among business group participants. Many note that while transit in Calgary generally works well and is essential to their operations, there are some frustrations. These frustrations include routes not consistently operating on time, or not providing easy or better access to their business (for employees and customers alike). For example, many cite how times can be unreliable and routes/stops are too far from their businesses and make for long walks for customers, which is not ideal for businesses open after dark.

Many also point out that while they feel the downtown core transit operates efficiently, the issue is getting people (customers and employees) downtown from outside of the core. In this light, many participants feel that cross quadrant transit improvements are needed. Many business participants say this lack of convenient, efficient, accessible access is a burden to their businesses not only when it comes to bringing in customers but also attracting employees.

Most business participants state that businesses in Calgary need transit to be operating efficiently and need it to be easily accessible in order to help their operations as well as their bottom line.

“Transit brings people to business – right by Whitehorn station, very convenient.”

“I am losing employees who don’t drive because they can’t get to the workplace.”

Parking – Access and Cost

Some business participants note that access to parking for brick-and-mortar locations can be a challenge. Whether it is lack of parking around locations (particularly downtown), or feeling that access is a forced choice between “parking” or “transit,” some point out that it is difficult for employees or customers who only use one form of transportation over the other. Participants feel that more could be done to provide businesses, their employees, and their customers a choice around which mode of transportation they wish to use.

“In a big city like Calgary every transportation and parking option should be available – let’s have a choice.”

“Certain parking stalls not thinking of retail businesses nearby. For example, if just running in for 5 mins then have to pay for 30 min spot.”

Business participants also note parking costs as a service could be improved. Participants cite the increasing costs to park downtown as a deterrent for Calgarians to visit downtown, which in turn impacts their ability to invest in, and spend downtown.

“Now the city has made parking downtown so expensive – are they trying to pull people into downtown or push them away?”

Summary 2: Perception of Value

Resident Summary

Key Themes: Generally, participants feel they are receiving good value for their tax dollars. Many would like to see some improvements, which would increase their perceptions of receiving value, in the following areas: more communication from The City regarding budget and spending, improved transit service (reliability and access – particularly in outlying communities), improved residential snow removal, more supports for marginalized communities (improve perceptions of safety).

Summary of Findings:

Generally, residential focus group participants feel they are receiving good value in the services they receive from The City for their tax dollars. Throughout the discussions, participants made note of how many services The City provides Calgarians, with some citing the many more so-called “invisible services” as well, such as internal City operations.

“Good value – stayed here for 80 years, getting good bang for my buck.”

Overall, many participants feel Calgary is a vibrant city, particularly when it comes to arts and culture and festivals, with world class parks and pathways. Many participants also note the libraries as providing “fantastic services” for Calgarians. Many point out how the library’s free services are accessible to all Calgarians, how it is generally one of the first services newcomers experience, and that they are good at digitizing and staying modern – which is appreciated by participants.

Additionally, arts and culture, parks and pathways, City recreational facilities (affordable and accessible), waste services (consistent, efficient), and transit services (with some room for improvement) topped the lists for services that provide the most value for taxes spent to Calgarians.

“Calgary has most expansive pathway system in North America, and I have taken advantage of that.”

While many focus group participants indicate feeling they receive value in the services they receive from The City for their tax dollars, there are some who do not. Among those that do not feel they are receiving value, current economic concerns (including inflation) appear to be a source of concern for the financial future of some Calgarians – some express concern with a potential rise in property taxes. Some participants do not feel they have enough knowledge and/or information regarding where The City is spending money and would like more

information to make them feel more comfortable and informed about where and how their tax dollars are being spent.

Some participants also do not think they are receiving an increase in service proportional to the increase in tax dollars being spent. For example, they see roads that need repair, feel there needs to be improved transit service (particularly when it comes to frequency of service and service to outlying areas), have concerns with public art spending (not only the dollars spent, but that artists are not being locally sourced), and would like to see improved residential snow removal. Some participants also note that they perceive a lack of consistency with service delivery among Calgary communities, and many believe that the downtown receives better services than other areas (for example with parks, recreation opportunities, and transit).

“I understand taxes have to increase but I feel things are slipping. Council is getting into things they shouldn’t be getting into. With inflation going up we will have to focus on the bare basics, roads, infrastructure, police, fire, ambulance, all the extra things “we think we need” are a luxury – like the “big blue ring”, arts, and recreation.”

Participants also discussed issues with safety around the city, particularly in downtown areas and on public transit. Some participants feel that the issue of safety in the city goes beyond simply increasing police services, and believe more needs to be done to help the city’s marginalized communities. Some participants specifically noted that the food bank, shelters, affordable housing, and access to mental health supports need increased attention and supports from The City.

“Calgary [is] starting to be a big city so that comes with big city problems – drugs, gangs, homelessness.”

“They won’t address the public health crisis (opioids) on the CTrain.”

Business Participant Summary

Key Themes: Business participants generally feel they are receiving good value for their money in terms of City services. Business participants clearly understand taxes go up when costs for everything go up. They also equate value to receiving the services they need when they need them – they need services to be accessible and operate efficiently. Business participants want more communication from The City and Council on service spending and allocation – how and why things are decided as they are.

Summary of Findings:

In general, business participants feel that receive good value for their tax dollars. However, some do feel that there lacks some creativity on Council’s part in terms of working with small business, and how dollars are currently being distributed among City services.

Many note that they have noticed a greater interest in downtown service needs and understand why this is the case. Business participants see the need to revitalize Calgary’s downtown core and understand the economic impact this has on the city as a whole.

Business participants equate “good value” to receiving the services they need when they need them. These services include, reliable and consistent public transit, infrastructure maintenance, snow removal, public transit, parking, and waste services.

When it comes to increasing taxes (particularly among downtown operated businesses), many understand that this is needed and attribute it as a response to prices of everything going up - so they don't feel the need to complain when it comes to tax increases. While they understand the reasoning behind increasing taxes, business participants do express the need to understand where these increased dollars are being spent, how they are being spent, and what benefit it will have to them as businesses – “What is in it for them?”

“Taxes are up for those who work in the downtown core but we are not benefiting from being downtown really.”

“Have services been going up with taxes? Paying more for the same.”

“Would like to know from the City if they are getting value – what are they spending money on? Can be small things not just large capital projects.”

Some business participants note feeling that local businesses are now “in competition” with government due to tax increases. While many participants state how they appreciated The City's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in freezing/lowering business licenses, operating costs have not yet “returned to normal” and they are still struggling to adapt to the changes that resulted from the pandemic. For example, some business participants state that at one time customers and clients had no problem paying more for parking (particularly downtown), but that is still not the case currently. They also discussed how hybrid work models factor into licence fees, feeling that with less people in physical locations full-time, perhaps some adjustments could be made.

“I used to have clients, all oil and gas, who did not have as much of a problem paying \$30 for parking because of what they were charging, but that is not the case anymore [not billing the same, so income has changed but paying more in taxes].”

“20% will quit if not offered hybrid work – is there then a need for big transit projects, expensive business licenses?”

Overall, while business participants are generally satisfied with the value they receive for their taxes/licence fees, they would like The City to be more transparent with their decisions and decision-making process when it comes to how tax dollars are allocated. This would give businesses a better idea as to where dollars are being spent and why. It would also give them more context into why decisions are being made the way that they are by Council.

Summary 3: Prioritization of Services

In this last section of the discussion, focus group participants were presented with a list of City services and asked what services stand out as a priority, what should be given more investment, and why should they be given more resources?

As part of this “service prioritization and service value” exercise, focus group participants were also presented a chart showing a monthly tax breakdown for residential property tax allocation. The list and the chart are included in the Appendix of this document for reference.

Resident Summary

<p>Key Themes: Focus group participants would like to see more priority placed on social services (including youth supports, and affordable housing), and city planning. While participants would like to see investment levels for police and transit remain the same, they would also like to see current spending reevaluated to identify inefficiencies. Participants want to “see results” for their tax dollars and want to see increased communication from The City regarding budget allocation as well as spending – this could help provide some assurance to residents that their tax dollars are being spent appropriately, efficiently, and effectively.</p>	
<p>Higher Priority Service Areas (summary of all mentions):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 311 service • 911 • Affordable housing for low-income families • Animal control services for stray animals and pet licensing • Bylaw services for things such as noise complaints, fire pits and weeds • Calgary Fire Department • Calgary Police Service • Calgary Transit including bus and CTrain service • Calgary’s parks, playgrounds and other open spaces • City growth management • City land use planning • City of Calgary website • City operated recreation facilities such as pools, leisure centres, and golf courses • City operated recreation programs such as swimming lessons • City operated roads and infrastructure • Community services such as support for community associations and not for profit groups • Development and building inspections and permits 	<p>Lower Priority Service Areas (summary of all mentions):</p> <p><i>*Please note: as elaborated in the summary below, in some cases participants feel that service is adequate and already receive the appropriate levels of attention and/or investment. For many, “low priority” does not necessarily translate to cutting services.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal control services for stray animals and pet licensing • Business licenses and inspections • Bylaw services for things such as noise complaints, fire pits and weeds • Calgary Police Service • Calgary’s parks, playgrounds and other open spaces • Calgary’s pathway system • City of Calgary website • City operated recreation facilities such as pools, leisure centres, and golf courses • City operated recreation programs such as swimming lessons • City operated roads and infrastructure • Community services such as support for community associations and not for profit groups • Development and building inspections and permits

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disaster planning and response • Downtown revitalization • On-street bikeways • Protection from river flooding • Residential Blue Cart recycling • Residential garbage collection service (Black cart) • Residential Green Cart service • Road maintenance including pothole repairs • Snow removal • Social services for individuals such as seniors or youth • Support for arts and culture including festivals • The quality of drinking water • Traffic flow management • Transportation planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disaster planning and response • Downtown revitalization • On-street bikeways • Property tax assessment • Protection from river flooding • Residential Blue Cart recycling • Residential garbage collection service (Black cart) • Residential Green Cart service • Spring road cleaning • Support for arts and culture including festivals • The quality of drinking water • Traffic flow management • Transportation planning
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Summary of Findings:

When discussing how to prioritize City services, some participants generally feel that The City website (while not without some room for improvement), tax assessment, business licenses, arts and culture (particularly so-called “frivolous art”), downtown revitalization, protection from river flooding (only affect those who live by river), parks and open spaces (operating very well already), and waste services (operating very well already), could be lower priority services.

Police services was also listed as a lower service priority – but not because participants feel they need less money, but because they feel that they did not need any more. Participants would like to see police services spending be reevaluated, with a potential increase in social services spending to help offset some of the pressures being placed on police services when it comes to homeless populations, addiction, and public perceptions of feeling unsafe in areas where these social issues are most prevalent (downtown, public transit).

Many participants note that they would like to see more priority placed on social services (as well as youth supports, and affordable housing) and city planning. When presented with a chart showing a monthly tax breakdown for residential property tax allocation (please see Appendix), many were surprised with how low city planning currently is when it comes to tax spending, noting that city planning is critical to ensure that the city is well situated for future growth.

“[I would] like to see more information on what is being done to diversify the economy and how that relates to their growth plans for the industry (attracting more talent etc.) – more public education.”

Participants also feel that with increased supports and spending on social services, perceptions on safety – particularly on transit and downtown, would increase. May also highlighted the gap between police and social services as the cause for increased pressures on police services.

“[On] first look I am a little taken aback at how high police service is, especially in contrast to social services.”

What Do Calgarians Need from The City?

Calgarians would like The City and Council to first look for inefficiencies, rather than areas/way to increase spending. For example, some point out that Calgary needs to have services available to those that need them most. Some participants note that many people who need affordable housing are not able to access it, which then contributes to homelessness. Many hope to see ways The City can help.

Many participants stated that Calgarians need to see results to feel they are receiving value from a service. They also need to see and hear more communication on budget planning, allocation, and spending from The City. Some participants suggested a municipal comparison of similarly sized cities to help Calgarians contextualize the services they are receiving for their tax dollars spent.

“I measure value for tax by snow removal, if delayed “there’s my tax dollars at work”.”

Business Participant Summary

<p>Key Themes: Business participants need more information and transparency regarding budget planning to better understand where funds are going. Business participants want The City to maintain service levels for recreation, waste services, snow removal, emergency services, transit, and infrastructure. Some business participants also want to see where funds could be reallocated for police and transit.</p>	
<p>Higher Priority Service Areas (summary of all mentions):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 311 service • 911 • Affordable housing for low-income families • Business licenses and inspections • Bylaw services for things such as noise complaints, fire pits and weeds • Calgary Fire Department • Calgary Police Services • Calgary Transit including bus and CTrain service • Calgary’s parks, playgrounds, and other open spaces • Calgary’s pathway system • City grown management • City land use planning • City operated roads and infrastructure • City of Calgary website 	<p>Lower Priority Service Areas (summary of all mentions):</p> <p><i>*Please note: as elaborated in the summary below, in some cases participants feel that service is adequate and already receive the appropriate levels of attention and/or investment. For many, “low priority” does not necessarily translate to cutting services.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal control services for stray animals and pet licensing • Bylaw services for things such as noise complaints, fire pits and weeds • Calgary Police Service • Calgary’s pathway system • City operated recreation facilities such as pools, leisure centres, and golf courses • City operated recreation programs such as swimming lessons • On-street bikeways

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City operated recreation facilities such as pools, leisure centres, and golf courses • City operated recreation programs such as swimming lessons • Community services such as support for community associations and not for profit groups • Development and building inspections and permits • Disaster planning and response • Downtown revitalization • On-street bikeways • Property tax assessment • Residential garbage collection service (Black cart) • Road maintenance including pothole repairs • Snow removal • Social services for individuals such as seniors or youth • Spring road cleaning • Support for arts and culture including festivals • The quality of drinking water • Traffic flow management • Transportation planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential Blue Cart recycling • Protection from river flooding • Residential Blue Cart recycling • Residential garbage collection service (Black cart) • Residential Green Cart service • Spring road cleaning • Support for arts and culture including festivals
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Summary of Findings:

Many business participants’ initial reaction to seeing the list of City services to prioritize was to seek more information. Participants had questions surrounding what the current distribution among the services were, as well as more specific details surrounding what each service entailed, including which are “bucketed” together, such as traffic flow management and transportation planning. Business participants also note that all services listed are essential, and thoughts on priority would vary from person to person.

“All important but can The City afford them?”

“Surprised about how many services there are? Lots of choices, gives me a better understanding of the job the City has.”

Discussions around the prioritization of services varied slightly between business groups. Overall, participants agreed that The City should prioritize services that are “basic needs” such as transportation (transit and infrastructure), emergency response (fire and police), waste removal, snow removal, affordable housing and social services, over more “traditional business”

services (such as licensing, permitting, etc.). Participants agreed that while these services are generally performing well (excluding access to social services, and affordable housing), prioritization means maintaining current levels of service, rather than “throwing more money” at a service that needs to be improved.

With this rationale in mind, some participants listed waste and recycling services as lower priority services – due to current satisfaction with service received.

“Throughout Covid we noticed a sharp increase of mental health concerns going untreated. The City has a role in this, to be collaborating with the Province.”

Other services that business participants feel could be lower priority, mainly due to current satisfaction with service with no major issues noted for improvement, were recreation facilities and programming, animal control services, bylaw services, on-street bikeways, and support for arts and culture including festivals.

When it comes to support for arts and culture including festivals, while business participants acknowledge the importance of a vibrant arts culture for a vibrant community and increased tourism, many feel that current arts and culture programs and services are providing good value to Calgarians and Calgary as a whole. There were some discussions surrounding the reasoning and decision-making process that has led to some larger investments into art installments currently on display in Calgary, particularly the “Blue Ring.” Some of these installments are not seen as a “good use of funds” among many participants. Participants would also like to see future public art pieces be locally sourced and produced.

Business participants were also shown a monthly expenditure breakdown of property taxes and City services (please see Appendix below). Many participants were surprised to see police and transit so high. Many believe these are areas where they would hope to see the most improvements in current services received and have some difficulty understanding “where the funds are going.”

Social Services and Support Access

While business participants were surprised to see police and transit services so high, they were equally surprised to see social services and economic development so low. Participants quickly attributed the low priority given to social services as a possible contributing factor to the safety issues currently facing the downtown core and public transit. Many business participants feel that increased support to social services will alleviate some of the concerns Calgarians have when it comes to both policing and transit (in regard to safety).

“Take a deep dive on emergency services efficiency – is there any fat to be cut? Could free a lot of money.”

“Look at emergency and police service, and how that money is spent. Surprised how little is spend on parks, leisure, downtown, arts and culture. If trying to make the city a place to come to you need to invest in those. Is spending reflecting goals of getting people to come here. Is spending reflecting what we want to be as a city?”

“Do not know if giving them money makes a difference – would rather see this go to mental health or addiction support.”

Better City Planning – Forward Thinking Planning

Business participants also discussed the needs for better city planning and forward-thinking planning. Urban sprawl is an issue for many business participants, with the main issue being connecting the outer areas to the downtown core (i.e., transit issues).

More Communication and Transparency

When it comes to budget planning and prioritization, business participants expressed the desire for more communication and transparency from The City and Council. Business participants provided the following suggestions in how to better communicate and information Calgarians:

- Provide more information regarding the budget planning process – and make it easily accessible.
- Provide written and defined metrics for success on spending – “What does success look like?”
- Provide benchmark metrics – “How are other jurisdictions similar to Calgary doing things?”
- Communicate what is being spent, and how much services are being used by Calgarians.
- Breakdown spending even more, show where funds are going within each “bucket.”
- Look for opportunities for privatizations (i.e., recreation, and arts and culture).

“I want to hear about budget planning process.”

“People assume inefficiency unless proven otherwise.”

“Show us how efficient you are at spending hard earned dollars, prove it.”

“More transparency on how funds are used. Think about how funds are used, can get external goodwill from other companies (e.g., Glenbow got donation from Shaw and now admission is free).”

Appendices

Appendix 1: Engagement Summary of Input

Cost Reduction Theme - Citizens expect The City to seek out efficiencies and cost reductions without lowering overall service levels, as service levels are connected with quality of life for Calgarians.

Question - Where do you see opportunities for The City to be more efficient or reduce costs while maintaining services needed for quality of life? How?	
Most Frequent Themes	Sample Participant Quotes
<p>Concerns about the cost of City human resources including number of management positions, high Administration and Councillor compensation and benefit levels, work coordination between departments, and consultant costs.</p>	<p>“Wage freezes for all city employees for the near future will likely help reduce the tax burden.”</p> <p>“Look at management levels and reduce so that ratio to workers is significantly reduced.”</p> <p>“Coordinate services between departments better.”</p>
<p>Expectation to focus on basic or core services delivery and have concerns about the value of too much tax dollars and resources going towards perceived nice-to-have and non-municipal services and projects.</p> <p>Perceptions of basic or core services were mixed and participants most frequently questioned the resource cost to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social programs • Climate emergency • Transportation infrastructure priorities • Services led by other levels of government 	<p>“Cut spending on non-essential core services”</p> <p>“Prioritized spending - what do citizens NEED. Once the priority list is taken care of, and ONLY then can we talk about extras.”</p> <p>“We need to focus on core city services and cut superfluous programs.”</p>
Additional Themes	Sample Participant Quotes
<p>Increase density and transit-oriented development.</p>	<p>“Approve more projects in residential neighborhoods on existing transit lines to increase housing. We must grow up vs out which is extremely expensive to service and maintain.”</p> <p>“Stop the Sprawl and focus on increasing density within established communities.”</p>
<p>Improve public transit and less on roads for vehicles.</p>	<p>“We spend too much on roads to allow individuals to move around in giant vehicles.”</p>

	<p>“Improve bussing so more people take it. Calgary is spread out so wide that currently, bussing everywhere is not feasible. More train lines are needed.”</p>
<p>Contract out more work to consultants and other services.</p>	<p>“Outsource all non-core services and have contracts re-bid annually.”</p> <p>“Replace more City-provided services with contract services.”</p>
<p>Increase property taxes and/or user fees.</p>	<p>“Increase user fees and permits.”</p> <p>“I think we actually need to increase taxes and services.”</p>

Social Wellbeing Theme - Collectively as a city, social wellbeing is important and citizens expect services to reflect safety, access to services and connections to create a sense of belonging for all Calgarians.

Question 1 - How do you think The City could improve social wellbeing and community connection?	
Most Frequent Themes	Sample Participant Quotes
<p>Improve the quality of public parks and community facilities and create more opportunities for the community to come together.</p>	<p>“Invest now in more local community parks, parks which are due for an update in 3 years for example, update those parks now as that will create jobs and benefit the whole community.”</p> <p>“Keep parks and green spaces rather than removing equipment and selling them off. They are gathering places.”</p> <p>“Increase the number of community centers to provide outreach and social/physical activities to build better community cohesion and support.”</p>
<p>Focus on opportunities for affordable programming and events and act as community hub for informal community connections and gatherings.</p>	<p>“The City has a crucial role in building a sense of community and creating opportunities for people to come together in different ways. If you get to know your neighbours and others in your community, it's more likely you will have more understanding of them as human beings.”</p> <p>“Develop existing areas as community hubs with parks and events and city-wide planning to engage our neighbours. Or even community wide.”</p> <p>“Create community hubs in communities that don't already have community centres instead! Stop holding all the city events downtown. Grants for Calgarians to apply for to help create community events or spaces that aren't all through the (unrepresentative & unengaged) community association.”</p>
<p>Prioritize safety on public transit and roads through bylaw and police presence and enforcement.</p>	<p>“Increase safety while using public transit is a must, I know many people who used to ride the train but now refuse to as they don't feel safe, at the stations you could introduce</p>

	<p>safety barriers, have more officers or general staff around, more options to report any ongoing or frequent issues at the station itself etc.”</p> <p>“Promote active modes and transit by discouraging private automobiles usage.”</p> <p>“Create more walkable spaces and provide alternative modes of transport with high quality service (separated bike lanes/improved transit service).”</p>
<p>Work with organizations and other levels of government to offer social and preventative programs.</p>	<p>“Collaboration across departments. Collaboration with provincial entities. Collaboration with community leaders.”</p> <p>“These are often provincial responsibilities that The City is trying to duplicate. Call out the province if programs are not doing well but don’t duplicate efforts.”</p> <p>“Extend outreach into communities and ensure community leaders are aware and spread the word.”</p>
<p>Question 2 - How do you think The City can improve current services to include the needs of Indigenous, Black and diverse Racialized peoples?</p>	
<p>Most Frequent Themes</p>	<p>Sample Participant Quotes</p>
<p>More diversity awareness and education through training opportunities and through programming and events.</p>	<p>“I’m not sure as I don’t fall into these categories. More opportunities to learn and hear their collective voices backed with real action that aligns to this. Maybe that simply means more time to engage.”</p> <p>“Unconscious bias training for city application processes, including “blind” applications. Include a broader definition of social justice outside of BIPOC. While an important group, other diverse groups are still marginalized and oppressed by city systems, programs, and services.”</p> <p>“Ensure public facing by-law, security, police, and peace officers receive mandatory training on trauma-informed and culturally appropriate care to protect the dignity of racialized citizens, the unhoused and homeless</p>

	<p>population as well as those struggling with mental illness.”</p>
<p>Ensure The City treats everyone equally in service delivery and not a separate focus on diverse Racialized peoples.</p>	<p>“Stop segregating by way of special treatment. Treat everyone the same regardless of where they come from.”</p> <p>“It is wrong to direct resources to certain favoured sub-groups. Focus on the basics for all people equally.”</p> <p>“Don’t treat any of us differently. By treating us equally we are better able to serve.”</p>
<p>More intentional outreach to diverse racialized peoples and organizations to learn about their perspective on service delivery where we can improve and/or focus on inclusivity and safety.</p>	<p>“Consult with organizations led by Black, Indigenous and racialized people. Partner with these organizations. Do not guess on what these groups need, ask them.”</p> <p>“Engage directly with immigrant serving organizations, including CLIP, to find target audience.”</p> <p>“It would be good to reach out to other organizations to provide insight and support on the diverse groups as the answer may lie with the groups that already exist instead of the city reinventing the wheel.”</p>

Fiscal Responsibility Theme - Calgarians have high expectations about fiscal responsibility and receiving value for services provided through a balance of property taxes and user fees.

Question - How else would you like The City to demonstrate to you that we are being fiscally responsible?	
Most Frequent Themes	Sample Participant Quotes
<p>Expectation to focus on basic or core services delivery and have concerns about the value of too much tax dollars and resources going towards perceived nice-to-have and non-municipal services and projects.</p> <p>Perceptions of basic or core services were mixed and participants most frequently questioned the resource cost to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social programs • Climate emergency • Transportation infrastructure priorities • Services led by other levels of government 	<p>“Reduce spending in any services that aren’t core services.”</p> <p>“Stop proposing to spend Calgary civic tax dollars on issues outside the scope of the city’s legal responsibilities.”</p> <p>“Ask the public BEFORE committing tax dollars for frivolous projects that are out of scope of City’s mandate.”</p>
<p>Expect more communication and transparency about the cost of city services and projects including more details and evaluations about the benefits and value.</p>	<p>“Provide more complete and transparent descriptions of where tax dollars go and what benefit they provide.”</p> <p>“Show visible changes from the investments financed by our taxes.”</p> <p>“More transparency in city council, better and more information on the challenges facing the city and how they are being addressed.”</p>
<p>Work within the budget and focus on basic or core services while not increasing taxes.</p>	<p>“Reduce taxes by taking a more aggressive approach to fiscal restraint.”</p> <p>“Reduce all frivolous spending and get back to basic services and start looking for ways to reduce my property taxes.”</p> <p>“Setting a cap on property tax increases, that the city council is legally bound to follow unless there are catastrophic unforeseen circumstances that happens (such as Covid pandemic, floods, etc.).”</p>
<p>Concerns about the cost of City human resources including number of management levels, number of Administration positions,</p>	<p>“Focus on cutting expenses including headcount and benefits.”</p>

<p>and Administration and councillor compensation and benefit levels.</p>	<p>“By evaluating the number of management and administration people and reducing the bloat and bureaucracy in our city.”</p> <p>“Stop raising taxes and giving raises in the public sector. You all should be making what the average salary of Calgarians is. You work for the people.”</p>
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Equity and Inclusion Theme - Equity and inclusion are important to consider when making decisions about services and service delivery that impact all Calgarians.

Question - How would you like to see City of Calgary services, programs and operations be more equitable, racially just and inclusive?	
Most Frequent Themes	Sample Participant Quotes
<p>Increase services and infrastructure equitably through all communities in the city.</p> <p>The understanding of equity and equality definitions were mixed.</p>	<p>“Equitable would mean that different service levels are delivered to different areas of the City dependent on needs - can't treat City like 1 entity. That would be a good place to start.”</p> <p>“More frequent and better routes and buses running around to city to better help our commutes.”</p> <p>“I am stunned by this question! All services, programs and operations should already be equitable, racially just and inclusive.”</p>
<p>Ensure all service delivery has a focus on affordability and accessibility.</p>	<p>“I'd like to see the cost of transit be lowered for everyone, as this is an inclusive service for all across all races and income levels.”</p> <p>“Improve accessibility - language, technology (not everyone is tech savvy), economics, physical accessibility (easy physical access for the disabled), respect and consideration for and inclusion of other cultures in our city.”</p> <p>“I would like to see the city of Calgary to charge people for what they use. Possibly give discounts to seniors who have worked most of their lives in Canada or to disabled individuals who can't work.”</p>
<p>Focus on alternative active modes of transportation as well as more accessible and affordable public transit solutions.</p>	<p>“Create more transit options and safer places to walk and wheel. Lots of students, older people, and new people in our neighbourhood so making transit and safer bike lanes/walking areas available helps people who are newer to Calgary get around more without walking long distances in empty parking lots.”</p> <p>“Higher priority on active modes. Discourage private autos.”</p>

	<p>“Feel safe walking, bussing and wheeling to my destination and not always wary of being crushed by a car nor being forced to own a car as transit is so much worse of an option.”</p>
<p>Nothing further needs to be done – some felt equity and inclusion was not The City’s responsibility and/or it is fine.</p>	<p>“This should not matter, please on focus on the efficiency and quality of service. I am very surprised about this question. It sounds like the services delivered to different races are different.”</p> <p>“The City of Calgary already does enough in these areas and needs not expand or spend more taxpayer money on these issues.”</p> <p>“It’s not the city’s job to solve society’s moral issues. The city exists to provide basic services to residents in a cost efficient way.”</p>

Community Growth and Changes Theme - Calgarians understand that sustainable growth and change will support increased service efficiency.

Question 1: As communities grow and change, what would you like to see included in our service plans and budgets in response?	
Most Frequent Themes	Sample Participant Quotes
Invest in transportation infrastructure, especially for active transportation modes, along with a focus on safe and reliable public transit service.	<p>“Public transportation and walking and cycling infrastructure has to be a priority.”</p> <p>“Envision our transportation network to not be dominated by individuals driving themselves around in personal vehicles; more expansive cycling network and better transit.”</p> <p>“You are failing at keeping public transit safe and clean.”</p>
Less new community approvals and increase established community density with a focus on transit-oriented development and active transportation modes.	<p>“Stopping the sprawl is important as is increasing density, encouraging active transportation, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.”</p> <p>“Stop endlessly expanding our boundaries and focus on thriving, resilient and denser communities with services designed to decrease the need to sprawl.</p> <p>“Inner city communities need reinvestment to maintain and repair aging infrastructure. Continuous low density sprawl makes this more challenging. A concerted effort to make it easier for Calgarians to travel by walking, cycling or transit is needed.”</p>
Invest in maintaining high quality park space through landscaping and activity infrastructure for safe recreation opportunities and programs.	<p>“Established communities need to have sustained funding for keeping infrastructure healthy and for adding needed infrastructure. We need recreation, parks, bike lanes, good sidewalks, etc.”</p> <p>“Maintain green space and parks.”</p> <p>“More money towards public spaces like parks and playgrounds. You can’t just keep building new parks without maintaining the old ones. People need these spaces to build community.”</p>

Question 2: How can The City improve how we sustain and improve services as we grow?	
Most Frequent Themes	Sample Participant Quotes
<p>Less new community approvals and increase established community density with a focus on transit-oriented development.</p>	<p>“Reduce sprawl. Focus on growth in established areas to better leverage municipal (recreation, libraries, parks) and provincial (schools) amenities, promoting greater sustainability and desirability of inner-city communities.”</p> <p>“I keep saying this--the City needs to be more dense. We need to cancel sprawl until there is more density in the current inner city (and even further out) communities.”</p> <p>“Limit growth in newer communities to focus services on the existing City footprint.”</p>
<p>Expectation to focus on basic or core services delivery and listen to Calgarians when making decisions and evaluating services and projects, and adapt to changing needs.</p> <p>Perceptions of basic or core services were mixed and participants most frequently questioned the resource cost to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social programs • Climate emergency • Transportation infrastructure priorities • Services led by other levels of government and agencies 	<p>“Stay in your lane. You are a municipal government. Do your role, keep to your area, focus on improvements and efficiencies not new and exciting things to do.”</p> <p>“Services should always be evaluated periodically to look for improvements and ensure that they are continuing to deliver value. The city should only sustain services that are of value to the city and service users.”</p> <p>“Invest in them. Adapt to changing needs (ie: change programming based on community need and best practices... don't just provide the same service if it can be done better and more efficiently).”</p>
Additional Themes	Sample Participant Quotes
<p>Concerns about the cost of City human resources including number of management levels, number of administration positions and employee compensation and benefit levels.</p>	<p>“Minimize additional admin positions and either reduce salary or benefit/pension and the money saved will allow you to afford to pay for police, fire and ambulance.”</p> <p>“The City of Calgary shouldn't be the largest employer in the city. Review the benefits and pensions and salaries offered with respect to what the city can afford to be fiscally responsible.”</p>

<p>Focus on improving public transit and make it more affordable.</p>	<p>“Cancel the Green line. Fix the transit system that is already in place with that money. Adding the green line won’t fix a transit system that is currently unreliable, inefficient, and expensive.”</p> <p>”More transit connections between suburbs (it takes longer to get between Bowness and Tuscany by transit than it does to get downtown). Create transit hubs in each neighbourhood with better frequency to encourage people to use transit.”</p>
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Closing Question

Question: What else is important for Council and Administration to consider when finalizing the 2023-2026 Service Plans and Budgets? Would you mind letting us know why this is important?	
Most Frequent Themes	Sample Participant Quotes
<p>Reduce or cap taxes by finding efficiencies and reducing costs of service delivery and Administration with a focus on basic or core services.</p> <p>Perceptions of basic or core services were mixed and participants most frequently questioned the resource cost to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social programs • Climate emergency • Transportation infrastructure priorities 	<p>“Get spending under control and improve efficiency within the city administration and operations. There is a lot of waste, and money could be saved without reducing services.”</p> <p>“Please continue to keep taxes low. We are all feeling the pinch of inflation and increased taxation will hurt Calgarians. Please try to streamline and simplify government/City operations to save money.”</p> <p>“Stop raising residential and non-residential property taxes. You already get more than enough tax revenue. Stop wasting it!”</p>
<p>Focus on basic or core services and infrastructure that are within municipal authority and be more transparent and open about costs.</p> <p>Perceptions of basic or core services were mixed and participants most frequently questioned the resource cost to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social programs • Climate emergency • Transportation infrastructure priorities • Services led by other levels of government 	<p>“Reduce property taxes, and reduce spending on unnecessary areas like DEI and climate policy. Focus on the core necessary programs.”</p> <p>“I want drastic service cuts, a focus on the basics, and significant tax cuts. The city should not be engaged in any activities outside of the most basic ones.”</p> <p>“Focus on core essential services. Spending money on non-essentials or on things being addressed by other levels of government, starves our own essential services (like police and fire departments). We all need safe streets (the only people who don't need them are the criminals). If we don't have the money to fund essential services at a level that keeps us safe, we're in trouble.”</p>
<p>Invest in safe and sustainable transportation delivery and infrastructure including public transit and active transportation modes.</p>	<p>“Make sure that the proposal is really necessary, such as a new LRT line. Look at coordinating traffic lights to provide a more fluid flow of traffic.”</p> <p>“Active transportation and transit should be significant priorities (more significant than</p>

	<p>they are now) within the massive transportation budget. Investment in these will have a major impact on creating a more equitable and just community that is serious about fighting climate change.”</p> <p>“Active transportation is a small fraction of the car infrastructure cost and provides an incredible return in investment.”</p>
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Appendix 2: Research - Charts Presented to Focus Group Participants

As part of the “service prioritization and service value” exercise both residential and business focus group participants were presented with list of City services as well as a chart showing a monthly tax breakdown for residential property tax allocation. These are included here for reference.



Services Slide

- 311 service
- 911
- Affordable housing for low-income families
- Animal control services for stray animals and pet licensing
- Business licenses and inspections
- Bylaw services for things such as noise complaints, fire pits and weeds
- Calgary Fire Department
- Calgary Police Service
- Calgary Transit including bus and CTrain service
- Calgary's parks, playgrounds and other open spaces
- Calgary's pathway system
- City growth management
- City land use planning
- City of Calgary website
- City operated recreation facilities such as pools, leisure centres, and golf courses
- City operated recreation programs such as swimming lessons
- City operated roads and infrastructure
- Community services such as support for community associations and not for profit groups
- Development and building inspections and permits
- Disaster planning and response
- Downtown revitalization
- On-street bikeways
- Property tax assessment
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- Social services for individuals such as seniors or youth
- Spring road cleaning
- Support for arts and culture including festivals
- The quality of drinking water
- Traffic flow management
- Transportation planning

